

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Grant to Expand Student State Leadership Opportunities
Awarded by the National Association of State Boards of Education**

The Montana Board of Public Education received a grant of \$2,000 from the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) to increase student representation. The funding is made possible through NASBE's *Student Leadership Initiative*, which is funded by MetLife Foundation to encourage leadership development among young people.

"Student representation on a state board of education provides a unique perspective and critical say about the full-range of K-12 educational issues from the very people such policies are meant to benefit. Moreover, since civic education is a basic purpose of public schooling, we would be remiss as state educational leaders if we did not 'practice what we preach' by instituting real opportunities for students to participate in their education and government decision-making," said Brenda Welburn, NASBE Executive Director.

In 2005, NASBE undertook research, also with the support of MetLife Foundation, to examine the impact of student representation on state boards of education. The study found that states boards of education with a student representative valued that member highly and, based on these findings, NASBE published a call for enhancing the role of student governance in its report, *Student Leadership in Education*. This grant is part of NASBE's ongoing effort to promote student participation and civic education.

Ms. Jenny Tiskus, a senior from Polson High School and the student representative to the Montana Board of Public Education, has taken the lead in establishing and maintaining the initiative. Future student representative Katie Wood from Laurel High School has committed to maintain the initiative and ensure that future student representatives are similarly committed. The Board of Public Education will continue to address the issue of communication challenges and garner ideas and recommendations from current Board membership. The Board will leverage authority to ensure the communication strategy is implemented and work with existing partners and technology. The Board of Public Education, led by the student representative, will work with NASBE staff to evaluate the impact of the grant.

The Montana Board of Public Education's student representative is connected to his/her constituency by the Montana Association of Student Councils (MASC). The student representative is chosen by the executive board of MASC and serves as a nonvoting member of the executive board for the entirety of his/her term as student representative to the Board of Public Education. The student representative also creates, administers, and presents the results of a survey taken by student attending the annual MASC conference in the fall. The student representative also presents at the annual conference. Additionally, the complete contact information of the student representative is available online at www.bpe.mt.gov.

MetLife Foundation supports programs that increase opportunities for young people to succeed, give students and teachers a voice in improving education, create connections between schools and communities and develop leadership. The Foundation works with national nonprofit organizations to develop a variety of initiatives, many of which address issues raised each year in *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*. For more information about MetLife Foundation, please visit www.metlife.org.